

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03  
INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03  
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SS-15 STR-04 CEA-01 PA-01 PRS-01 PM-04 /090 W  
-----250841Z 104777 /17

R 230800Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1272  
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 HELSINKI 0817

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, FI  
SUBJECT: NEW TALKS ON FORMING MAJORITY GOVERNMENT: RELEVANT  
DOMESTIC POLITICAL/ECONOMIC FACTORS

REF: (A) 76 HELSINKI 2573, (B) 76 HELSINKI 2634, (C) HELSINKI 624,  
(D) HELSINKI 0815, (E) HELSINKI 0498, (F) 76 HELSINKI A-120,  
(G) HELSINKI 0334

1. SUMMARY: CENTRIST PARTIES MINORITY GOVT HAS INVITED  
SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SDP) AND COMMUNIST ELECTION-FRONT  
ORGANIZATION SKDL TO BEGIN TALKS APRIL 22 TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE  
BASES FOR FORMING MAJORITY GOVT. THIS MESSAGE CONSIDERS GOVT  
FORMATION QUESTION WITHIN CONTEXT OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENTS OVER PAST FEW MONTHS WHICH WILL HAVE IMPORTANT  
BEARING UPON OUTCOME OF TALKS. END SUMMARY

2. TALKS ARE LATEST IN SERIES OF SIMILAR EFFORTS THAT HAVE  
OCCURRED OVER PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, MOST IMPORTANT PREVIOUS  
DISCUSSIONS HAVING BEEN THE UNSUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION OF  
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LAST NOV-DEC AND LAST MARCH. CONSIDERABLE SCEPTICISM  
HAS GREETED LATES INVITATION, WHICH CONSIDERED BY MANY  
AS TACTICAL PLOY BY CENTER PARTY. FEW OBSERVERS SEE ANY  
LIKELIHOOD AT ALL THAT SKDL COULD FORM PART OF MAJORITY  
GOVT, DESPITE SKDL PROFESSIONS OF INTEREST. COOL  
REACTION OF SDP TO TALKS AND ITS VIEW --  
REJECTED BY PRIMIN MIETTUNEN APRIL 21 -- THAT GOVT RESIG-

NATION WOULD AID TALKS, DO NOT BODE WELL FOR SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS. BECAUSE SDP CHAIRMAN AND GENERAL SECRETARY, AND COMMUNIST PARTY (SKP) CHAIRMAN, ALL OUT OF COUNTRY, TALKS APRIL 22 WILL NOT BEGIN AT HIGHEST PARTY LEVELS. IT LIKELY, HOWEVER, THERE WILL BE SUBSEQUENT TALKS BY PARTY LEADERS.

3. ONE IMPORTANT FACTOR THAT WILL INFLUENCE CLIMATE OF DISCUSSIONS RE BROADENING OF CURRENT MINORITY GOVT IS THE DEMONSTRATED WILLINGNESS OF GOVT TO RESORT TO USE OF CENTER/RIGHT POLITICAL COOPERATION. EMB UNDERSCORED IMPORTANCE OF CENTER/RIGHT ALTERNATIVE WHEN, AFTER TEN-YEAR ABSENCE, LATTER RE-EMERGED IN LAST DECEMBER'S BUDGET AGREEMENT BETWEEN GOVT PARTIES, CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND CHRISTIAN LEAGUE (REFTELS A, B). SIGNIFICANCE OF RE-EMERGENCE OF CENTER/RIGHT ALTERNATIVE HAS BEEN BORNE OUT BY SUBSEQUENT EVENTS, AS MINORITY GOVT HAS TURNED TO CONSERVATIVE PARTIES FOR SUPPORT AGAIN AND AGAIN ON VARIOUS PARLIAMENTARY ISSUES. MOST SYMBOLICALLY IMPORTANT USE OF CENTER/RIGHT ALTERNATIVE (SINCE BUDGET AGREEMENT) OCCURRED LAST MONTH DURING CENTRIST PARTIES-SDP TALKS SEEKING "BUILD CONFIDENCE" PRELIMINARY TO POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS FOR MAJORITY GOVT. IN MIDST OF DIFFICULT AND NON-PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS ON SPECIFIC ISSUE OF LAND-PRICING POLICIES (REF C) GOVT IN SUDDEN MANEUVER ASKED PARLIAMENT FOR EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE IN ITS MANAGEMENT OF LABOR SITUATION. THANKS TO SUPPORT OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND CHRISTIAN LEAGUE MP'S, GOVT WON MAJORITY EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT OVER BITTER OPPOSITION

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OF SDP AND SKDL.

4. THIS TACTICAL MOVE BY GOVT HAS MADE SDP SUSPICIOUS OF FURTHER TALKS SOUGHT BY GOVT PARTIES, SUCH AS THOSE SCHEDULED BEGIN APRIL 22. MANEUVER, HOWEVER, DRAMATICALLY UNDERSCORED FACT THAT GOVT NOT DEPENDENT UPON SDP SUPPORT AND CAN TURN TO RIGHT FOR SUPPORT ON CERTAIN QUESTIONS, PARTICULARLY ECONOMIC ISSUES. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT, ACCORDING TO CHAIRMAN OF LIBERAL PARTY, GOVT MOVE WAS CLEARED IN ADVANCE WITH PRES KEKKONEN.

5. TWO ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF PRATICAL EFFECT OF SELECTIVE CENTER/RIGHT COOPERATION IN DAY-TO-DAY PARLIAMENTARY MANEUVERING OCCURRED THIS WEEK WHEN CONSERVATIVE MP VOTES IN PARLIAMENT COMMITTEES PERMITTED TWO IMPORTANT PIECES OF GOVT LEGISLATION (LAND PRICING POLICY AND ELIMINATION OF TURNOVER TAX ON CONSTRUCTION INVESTMENTS BY INDUSTRY) TO PASS PRELIMINARY LEGISLATIVE HURDLES OVER OPPOSITION OF SDP AND SKDL.

6. A SECOND IMPORTANT FACTOR TO BE CONSIDERED IN MINORITY GOVT VS. MAJORITY GOVT QUESTION IS FACT THAT CURRENT GOVT HAS VERY EXPERTLY AND SUCCESSFULLY HANDLED DEVALUATION ISSUE (SEPTTEL) AND HAS BEEN ABLE SURVIVE LABOR CONTRACTS CRISIS WHICH NOW APPEARS WELL ON ROAD TO RESOLUTION. MOST MAJOR LABOR UNIONS ARE NOW COMMITTED TO ACCEPTING LABOR MEDIATOR'S SETTLEMENT FORMULA (REF D). MANY OBSERVERS HAD DOUBTED THAT A MINORITY GOVT LACKING THE SUPPORT OF ONE OR BOTH OF WORKER PARTIES (SDP AND SKDL) WOULD BE ABLE TO GOVERN THROUGH PERIOD OF LABOR CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS WITH FINLAND'S HIGHLY POLITICIZED LABOR MOVEMENT. AFTER LABOR CONTRACTS ISSUE SAFELY PAST, IT APPEARS GOVT MAY FACE NO SEVERE CHALLENGE THAT MIGHT ENDANGER ITS SURVIVAL FOR NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS.

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R 230800Z APR 77  
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7. BECAUSE OF TWO FACTORS DISCUSSED ABOVE, CENTRIST GROUPS HAVE GAINED CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ABILITY CONTINUE IN GOVT, ON MINORITY BASIS IF NECESSARY. CENTRIST PARTIES' SOURCES REPORT CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT AMONG RANK AND FILE FOR CONTINUATION OF MINORITY GOVT; FREQUENTLY THEIR SUPPORTERS FAVORABLE COMPARE CURRENT GOVT WITH PRECEDING FIVE-PARTY MAJORITY GOVT THAT INCLUDED BOTH SDP AND SKDL. BECAUSE OF CENTER GROUPS' RELATIVE CONFIDENCE AND SATISFACTION, NOT TO MENTION OBVIOUS BENEFITS OF BEING ABLE DIVIDE AMONG THEMSELVES

ALL CABINET POSTS AND PATRONAGE, GOVT PARTIES HAVE NOT SHOWN THEMSELVES OVERLY EAGER COMPROMISE WITH SDP ON IMPORTANT ISSUES.

8. MOREOVER, AS EMPHASIZED IN REF B, FINLAND'S DEEP INFLATION/RECESSION PROBLEM HAS TENDED ACCENTUATE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CENTRIST PARTIES AND LEFT WHEREAS CENTRIST PARTIES AND CONSERVATIVE PARTY HAVE FOUND THEIR VIEWS CLOSER TOGETHER ON IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ISSUES. ALSO, LAND POLICY AND AGRICULTURAL QUESTIONS TEND TO BE EMOTIONAL  
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ISSUES BETWEEN CENTER GROUPS AND SDP WHEREAS THEY PRESENT NO SUCH PROBLEMS TO CENTER/RIGHT RELATIONS.

9. MEANWHILE, SDP REMAINS DEVIDED AS TO WHETHER AND ON WHAT TERMS IT MIGHT RETURN TO GOVT. SDP LEADERSHIP HAS ON REPEATED OCCASIONS SINCE NOVEMBER STATED PUBLICLY -- AND REITERATED PRIVATELY TO EMBOFFS -- THAT IT WANTS TO TAKE PARTY BACK INTO GOVT. THEY OFFER SEVERAL REASONS. SUBSTANTIVELY, THEY BELIEVE GOVT PROGRAMS WOULD BE BETTER WITH SDP INSIDE GOVT AND PARTICULARLY INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE WOULD BE BETTER DEFENDED. ALSO, SDP LEADERS WANT TO BE IN GOVT TO INFLUENCE FORMULATION FO FY 1978 BUDGET, WHICH IS ALREADY IN EARLY STAGES OF PREPARATION WITHIN MINISTRIES. SDP LEADERSHIP WANTS GOOD FAITH NEGOTIATIONS IN WHICH CENTRIST PARTIES WOULD COMPROMISE ON CERTAIN ISSUES (REF E) IMPORTANT TO SDP. HOWEVER, PARTICULARLY AFTER LAST MONTH'S PARLIAMENTARY CONFIDENCE MANEUVER, SDP LEADERS QUESTION GOOD FAITH OF GOVT'S NEGOTIATION INTENTIONS, AND CHARACTERIZE GOVT AS BEING INTRANSIGENT AND OVER-CONFIDENT.

10. SDP LEADERS ARE RELUCTANT ADMIT THAT ANY DIVISIONS EXIST IN PARTY OVER THIS ISSUE AND STATE THAT IF GOVT WOULD AGREE TO REASONABLE TERMS, SDP PARLIAMENTARY GROUP WOULD SUPPORT SDP RETURN TO GOVT. MEMBERS OF SDP PARLIAMENTARY GROUP HAVE USUALLY TAKEN SAME LINE, DENYING ANY SERIOUS LACK OF CONSENSUS WITHIN PARTY. HOWEVER, IT INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT MANY WITHIN SDP PARLIAMENTARY GROUP WILLING RETURN GOVT ONLY ON SDP'S OWN TERMS, AND THAT THEIR PRESSURES ON PARTY LEADERSHIP HAVE HAMPERED SDP LEADERSHIP'S FLEXIBILITY IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH GOVT. SINCE CONFIDENT CENTRIST PARTIES IN NO MOOD GIVE IN TO WHAT THEY CONSIDER EXCESSIVE SDP DEMANDS, POSITION OF SDP PARLIAMENTARY GROUP HAS BLOCKED THUS FAR ANY REALISTIC POSSIBILITY OF SDP RETURN TO GOVT. MOREOVER, SOME SDP MP'S NOW TALK OPENLY OF THEIR  
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OPPOSITION TO SDP RETURN TO GOVT. THEY PREFER THAT SDP STAY OUT OF GOVT, ASSUME OPPOSITION LINE AGAINST "BOURGEOIS" GOVT AND REBUILD SUPPORT AMONG WORKERS.

11. IN PRACTICE, THEN, SDP LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN UNABLE GET FULL PARTY SUPPORT FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH CENTRIST PARTIES AND TO MANY OBSERVERS HAS APPEARED WEAK AND INEFFECTUAL. HEMMED IN BY CONFIDENT CENTRIST PARTIES ON ITS RIGHT, BY CLEARLY DEFINED OPPOSITION LINE OF COMMUNISTS ON ITS LEFT AND HAMPERED BY ITS OWN INTERNAL LACK OF CONSENSUS, THE SDP FINDS ITSELF IN VERY WEAK TACTICAL POSITION AND WITHOUT CLEAR PICTURE OF ITS FUTURE ROLE. PARTY LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED IRRITATION IN PUBLIC AND FRUSTRATION IN PRIVATE. ONE RANKING SDP OFFICIAL TOLD POLCOUNS THAT SDP "NEEDS A BREAK," AND HOPED THAT MAYBE PRES KEKKONEN WILL SAVE SDP FROM ITS DILEMMA BY FORCING FORMATION OF MAJORITY GOVT.

12. POSSIBILITY OF KEKKONEN INTERVENTION TO FORCE MAJORITY GOVT AGAIN BEING WIDELY MENTIONED. POSSIBILITY HIS DOING SO CAN BY NO MEANS BE DISCOUNTED. BASIC ARGUMENT PRESENTED IN FAVOR OF MAJORITY GOVT IS CONVENTIONAL WISDOM, WIDELY ACCEPTED IN CENTRIST AND MODERATE SDP CIRCLES, THAT BI-POLARIZATION OF FINNISH POLITICS BETWEEN CENTER/RIGHT ON ONE HAND AND SDP/SKDL ON OTHER WOULD ENDANGER FINNISH DOMESTIC POLITICAL STABILITY AND MIGHT EVEN HAVE REPERCUSSIONS ON FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS (REF F DISCUSSES THIS ARGUMENT AS USED AGAINST CONSERVATIVE PARTY PARTICIPATION IN GOVT). ARGUMENT NOW GOES THAT GOVT'S RECOURSE TO COOPERATION WITH RIGHT ON ONE OR MORE OCCASIONS MAY HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED FOR SHORT-RUN AND TACTICAL REASONS, BUT THERE IS DANGER OF HABIT BECOMING TOO DEEPLY ENGRAINED; THEREFORE NOW IS TIME BRING SDP BACK INTO GOVT TO AVOID POSSIBILITY THAT SDP MIGHT DRIFT INTO TOO CLOSE "ANTI-BOURGEOIS" COOPERATION WITH COMMUNISTS, AS DEMANDED BY A FEW LEFT-  
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WING SOCIAL DEMOCRATS.

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R 230800Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1274  
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
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13. THIS LINE OF ARGUMENT HAS HAD CONSIDERABLE APPEAL  
OVER THE YEARS AND INDEED WAS AN IMPORTANT CONCEPTUAL  
UNDERPINNING OF CENTER-LEFT GOVT COALITION WHICH DOMINATED  
FINNISH GOVTS 1966-76. PRES KEKKONEN IS BELIEVED TO  
HAVE STRONGLY HELD THIS VIEW.

14. HOWEVER, AS NOTED ABOVE, IMPORTANT RIFTS AND  
FORMIDABLE OBSTACLES CURRENTLY STAND IN WAY OF RESUMPTION  
OF CENTER/LEFT COALITION GOVT. MANY BELIEVE IT WOULD  
TAKE MAJOR POLITICAL EFFORT BY KEKKONEN TO TRY TO PULL  
IT OFF, AND EVEN THEN RESULTS WOULD NOT BE CERTAIN.  
IN ABSENCE OF ANY IMMEDIATE AND OVERRIDING FOREIGN  
POLICY CONSIDERATION, KEKKONEN -- WHO HAS ALREADY HAD ONE  
DOMESTIC POLITICAL REBUFF THIS YEAR (REF G) -- MIGHT  
WELL BE RELUCTANT RISK SUCH POLITICAL GAMBLE. THERE  
HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION THAT PRES KEKKONEN  
WOULD STRONGLY PUSH FOR MAJORITY GOVT BEFORE HIS TRIP  
TO MOSCOW, SCHEDULED FOR MAY, IN ORDER STRENGTHEN HIS  
HAND IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH SOVIET LEADERS, PARTICULARLY  
ON QUESTION OF FINNISH NEUTRALITY. HOWEVER, GENERAL  
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FINNISH SATISFACTION OVER NEUTRALITY LANGUAGE IN  
COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWING SOVIET PRIMIN KOSYGIN VISIT FINLAND  
LAST MONTH HAS REMOVED THIS ISSUE TEMPORARILY AS FACTOR  
IN GOVT FORMATION TALKS. ALSO, RESULTS OF PREVIOUS  
MIETTUNEN GOVT, VIRTUALLY FORCED TOGETHER BY KEKKONEN IN

FALL OF 1975, CAN HARDLY ENCOURAGE PRESIDENT TO TAKE  
SIMILAR COURSE AGAIN.

15. MOST WELL-INFORMED POLITICAL SOURCES ARE PREDICTING  
CURRENT MINORITY GOVT WILL LAST UNTIL SUMMER OR AUTUMN  
OR NEXT YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OR EVEN LONGER. KEY  
ECONOMIC SOURCES, INCLUDING SOME CLOSE TO CENTER PARTY,  
ALMOST UNANIMOUS IN EXPECTATION GOVT WIL CONTINUE UNTIL  
FALL. HOWEVER, SOME WELL-INFORMED SOURCES ARE PREDICTING  
THAT TALKS BEGINNING FRIDAY WILL, WITH AN ASSIST FROM  
KEKKONEN, LEAD TO EARLY FORMATION OF MAJORITY GOVT.  
EMBASSY'S FIRM JUDGMENT IS: MAYBE THEY WILL AND MAYBE  
THEY WOUN'T. THE ODDS SEEMS TO FAVOR CONTINUATION OF  
MINORITY GOVT AT LEAST INTO SUMMER, BUT POSSIBILITY OF  
STRONG ACTION OF KEKKONEN MAKES PREDICTION IN THIS  
MATTER HAZARDOUS.

16. WHATEVER FUTURE HOLDS FOR THIS MINORITY GOVT,  
ITS PERFORMANCE BOTH POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY HAS  
BEEN BETTER THAN THAT OF ITS PREDECESSOR. ALSO, FROM  
PERSPECTIVE OF U.S. INTEREST IN FINLAND, EMB BELIEVES  
GOVT PERFORMANCE, ON BALANCE, HAS BEEN SALUTARY.  
POLITICALLY, AS ALREADY EMPHASIZED, IT HAS RESTORED  
CENTER/RIGHT ALTERNATIVE TO FINNISH POLITICS, AN IMPORTANT  
CONTRIBUTION TO MAXIMIZING FREE PLAY OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL  
FORCES IN FINLAND. EMB AGREES THERE WOULD BE SOME  
RISK, HOWEVER, SHOULD CENTER/RIGHT COOPERATION BECOME  
SO DEEP AND LONG TERM AS TO POLARIZE FINNISH DOMESTIC  
POLITICS BETWEEN RIHT AND LEFT. ECONOMICALLY, LIKE ITS  
PREDECESSORS, CURRENT GOVT HAS NOT HAD SUFFICIENT STRENGTH  
OR WILL TO PURSUE VIGOROUS AND CONSISTENT ECONOMIC  
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STABILIZATION PROGRAM, AND MORE THAN ITS PREDECESSORS,  
IT HAS INCREASED LEVEL OF UNECONOMIC SUBSIDIES TO ALREADY  
OVERLY SUBSIDIZED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS. HOWEVER, IT  
HAS ALSO GIVEN CONSISTENT SUPPORT TO BANK OF FINLAND'S  
TOUGH MONETARY POLICY, HAS PASSED INTO LAW A RELATIVELY  
TIGHT 1977 BUDGET, HAS TOGETHER WITH BANK OF FINLAND  
FLAWLESSLY MANAGED LAST MONTH'S SMALL DEVALUATION, AND  
HAS HELD FIRM THROUGH VERY DIFFICULT LABOR CONTRACTS  
NEGOTIATION PROCESS WHICH APPARENTLY IS RESULTING IN  
RELATIVELY NON-INFLATIONARY TWO-YEAR WAGE AGREEMENTS  
(REF D). WHILE CURRENT GOVT'S PERFORMANCE MAY  
NOT BE GOOD ENOUGH, GIVEN FINLAND'S NEED TO REGAIN INTER-  
NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS IN ITS EXPORTS, ONE QUESTIONS  
WHETHER A CENTER/LEFT MAJORITY COALITION GOVT, IF  
FORMED, WILL BE ABLE TO DO AS WELL. FINALLY, CENTRIST  
PARTIES GOVT'S MANAGEMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS  
TENDED TO BE SOMEWHAT MORE CONSONANT IN TONE WITH

U.S. PERCEPTIONS ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES THAN  
PRECEDING CENTER/LEFT GOVTS.

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